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THE RAINBOW IN GENESIS.

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The passage respecting the rainbow in Gen. 9: 13 sq. is as follows: "I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said to Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth."

In Ezek. 1 the rainbow is mentioned—not, however, alluding to this passage in Genesis. In the Old Testament there appears to be no other allusion to the phenomenon. The fact of which it is made a token is, however, recognized in Isa. 54: 9: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." It is possible to refer this passage in Isaiah to Gen. 8: 21, which is apparently referred to in Jer. 31: 35 and 33: 20; but the reference in Isaiah is so explicit to the flood that it seems more likely that he had in mind the pledge in connection with the rainbow than that in connection with the perpetuity of day and night and the seasons.

The importance of this pledge is in the symbolic meaning of the rainbow, yet it is worth while to answer the question, which arises partly from curiosity, whether there had previously been no rainbows. Some have maintained that there

had not been. Keil on this passage says: "The establishment of the rainbow as the covenant sign of the promise, presupposes that it appeared then for the first time in the vault and clouds of heaven. From this it may be inferred, not that it did not rain before the flood, which could be hardly reconciled with chap 2: 5, but that the atmosphere was differently constituted; a supposition in perfect harmony with the facts of natural history which point to differences in the climate of the world's surface before and after the flood. The fact that the rainbow, that 'colored splendor thrown by the bursting forth of the sun upon the departing clouds,' is the result of the reciprocal action of light and air and water, is no proof or disproof of the origin and design recorded here. For the laws of nature are ordained by God, and have their ultimate ground and purpose in the divine plan of the universe which links together both nature and grace." The last sentence from Keil involves a principle which does away entirely with any need of the explanation which he adopts. That characteristic of the divine economy which is indicated in the description of the Lamb as slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13: 8) marks the providential dealing of God with the human race as being full of facts, the meaning of which is gradually revealed as occasion demands. One stage in the development of the atonement finds expression under the old Covenant in the statement that He was afflicted with His ancient people in all their affliction (Isa. 63: 9). This investiture of a previously occurring natural phenomenon is but a minor incident in the general usage. It is incomparably more comforting and inspiring to recognize the fact that an occurrence, with which Noah was already familiar, was made the pledge of the divine promise, than that a new phenomenon was introduced into the processes of nature. If the opinion of Keil is to be maintained, why not also maintain that there never went forth a sower to sow until that day on which Jesus uttered His parable. Jesus took the earth, monotonously familiar as it was to His hearers, and showed that it was full of the analogies to the kingdom which He had come to establish. He glorified forever the commonplace details of daily, and even household industries. Therefore, the

explanation which regards God as investing with new meaning one of his creations, is also in harmony with the methods of the Son when He came to teach men of the kingdom. It is also in harmony with the general method of divine teaching to attach a new truth to something already existing. Think how the marriage relation as the symbol of the relation of Christians to Christ received its development. Starting from the suggestion in the declaration that Jehovah is a jealous God, then the idea of idolatry as spiritual adultery found expression, followed by the representation of the relation between Jehovah and Israel as that of husband and wife; and lastly, in the New Testament is this form of the relation between Christ and His disciples wrought out with delicacy and advancing clearness.

According to the passage, this token was to be to God a reminder of His pledge. It was equally a reminder to man. For this purpose it was well adapted. It has been said that a "sign is a thing, which over and above the impression which it makes upon the senses, causes something else to come into the mind." Anything, therefore, can be taken as a sign: e. g. a stone which had in itself no meaning or value, may be used as marking the boundary of a field. Not such is this sign. There is a principle here the same as that in those parables which take some object in nature or fact in the physical world to symbolize the spiritual truth or fact, and which are properly called symbolic parables. It is such a principle which gives the wonderful comfort in the 125th Psalm. This rainbow had a fitness for the purpose to which it was applied, for after the appearance of an entire rainbow, as a rule, no rain of long duration follows; and the darker the background the more bright does it appear. As such a sign doubtless Noah already knew it. A harbinger of the cessation of a storm was a fitting symbol of the close of that flood which was never to be repeated. The beautiful object which already had a natural adaptation to its purpose "God consecrated as the sign of His love and witness of His promise." Worthy of approbation is the comment of Delitzsch: "It is, indeed, a phenomenon which may be accounted for by natural laws;

but the laws of nature are truly the appointment of God, Eccclus. 43: 11 sq.; and it is just in its conformity to natural law that the rainbow is a pledge that the order of nature shall continue. And is there not in every law of nature a background pointing to the mysteries of the Divine nature and will? The label of the rainbow is sufficiently legible. Shining upon a dark ground which just before broke in lightning, it represents the victory of the light of love over the fiery darkness of wrath. Originating from the effect of the sun upon a dark cloud, it typifies the willingness of the heavenly to pervade the earthly. Stretched between the heaven and the earth, it is a bond of peace between both, and, spanning the horizon, it points to the all-embracing universality of the divine mercy."

This sign has been called a prophecy, as in fact must be the case with every sign which is the symbol of a promise. It has been called "the charter of natural mercies and blessings;" or again, "the world's covenant, not the Church's." These things are rightly said. The very terms are comprehensive, embracing all living creatures, beasts as well as men. Then, too, the promise belongs to the period of general, not particular, revelation.

This appropriation of the rainbow, on the ground of adaptation to the purpose, as a pledge of the divine promise, turns the thought toward the numerous analogies between the physical world and the realm of spiritual truth with the question respecting their practical bearing. The fact and significance is finely put in the second introductory chapter of Trench's *Notes on the Parables*. One wishes that he might acquire the power to use the familiar life and surroundings to impress spiritual truth as powerfully as was done in biblical times. Here is a wide field, not for mere illustration like the comparisons and poetic imagery which adorn the writings of imagination. There is room for such imagination, but even more for the action of the mind of the seer reflecting on these analogies. In the efforts to find such analogies there is sometimes a wild play of the imagination, or rather fancy, not discerning the true analogies from the false. The more fertile and less disciplined the imagination, the more likely to mis-

take fancies for facts. Yet this error is often less reprehensible than that aridity of the intellect which sees no likeness in the things heavenly and earthly, and claims that it is a defilement of the spiritual truth thus to compare it. The many books on the parables show that this method of teaching is more and more obtaining a recognition of its importance. Let careful attention be paid to the underlying principles, and care be taken to avoid superficial likenesses, then one will find the analogies which he, as a religious teacher, can use with effect. If a teacher or preacher is self-distrustful, and fears that his use of natural symbols of religious truth fails of its object, he may study the methods of the biblical writers, and imitate such examples as Jeremiah sets. Jer. 31: 35, 36 and 33: 20, 21, is a vigorous appropriation of Gen. 8: 21. Let a teacher freely use these expressions of divine truth which are found in the Scripture itself to convey the religious truth in the symbols drawn from the natural world. Not long ago there was current in the religious papers a story of a fisherman who had been converted to Christianity through the call to follow the Master and become a fisher of men. To him the Bible assumed the form of spiritual truth almost wholly expressed in the symbols of his favorite craft. Such a power there resides in the symbols which are in the Bible that they can be drawn forth into daily service even after the use of the centuries.

All writers of the Bible do not use symbols with like freedom. It may be that Saul of Tarsus was bred in the midst of city surroundings, so that the symbols of the religious truths and life drawn from external nature did not find a place in his thoughts. Be that as it may, his writings have little to do with the symbolism of the natural world; yet with what power does the analogy drawn from the grain of wheat to the death and resurrection seize hold of the thought of the reader of 1 Cor. 15! This can hardly be thought a mere illustration, rather must we believe that Paul meant it to be a symbol of the body which is laid away after death.

In a community familiar with Pilgrim's Progress it would be natural, in fact inevitable, to illustrate the Christian life from that symbolic "dream." How much rather from the

Bible itself, and the symbols it draws from external nature. The Gospels and the epistles of James and Peter in the New Testament are redolent with the air of earth as well as of heaven. This is true of the prophets and psalmists of the Old Testament.

It would not be strange if a careful study of the symbols of spiritual truth drawn from the Bible would lead one to feel that the whole ground was occupied, and that he could add nothing. By the time that one had learned enough of biblical symbols to reach this conclusion, his knowledge of biblical methods would have become so extensive that he would also have learned the nature of the analogies which give the symbols their value. In short, this would be the kind of training which would lead one to the independent use of the earth and earthly relations as symbols of spiritual truth.

MR. PETRIE'S DISCOVERIES AT THE BIBLICAL TAHPANES.

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To the student of the Bible, one of the most satisfactory of recent discoveries in Egypt is that made in 1886 by Mr. Flinders Petrie at Tahpanes, on the eastern Delta. The thirty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah and Josephus Ant. x. 9, 1 tell us that Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jerusalem, made Zedekiah his captive, burned the city and carried away the most of its inhabitants to Babylon. The feeble remnant of Judah scattered about were gathered under Johannan, and fled to Tahpanes in Egypt. In this party were "the King's daughters," Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch, his amanuensis. Tahpanes was about twelve miles west from the modern El-Kantara, on the Suez Canal. The Greeks called it Daphne. This Hebrew party reached Tahpanes during the reign of Pharaoh-Hophra, the son of Psammethik II. of the XXVI. dynasty. He is called Uahabra, with the throne name Ra-